

August 6, 2002

To Whom this May Concern:

As a native deaf person raised in the south, access to technology was minimal to nothing. It was not until I attended Gallaudet University that I began to experience "life-made-easier" through the use of modern technology. I moved to Wisconsin and took a job with Milwaukee Public Schools in the fall of 1986. Since that time, I have discovered multiple ways of gaining access to modern technology that continues to enhance the quality of my life. One of the most critical upgrades in technology that has influenced my life the most is the use of the telephone. The relay service was an incredible break through at the time of its birth; however, since that time I have preferred the use of the computer for e-mail and online chat simply because it gave me greater control over my phone contacts. It also expand my contacts at work. Since I work as a School Psychologist in MPS, it has not been easy to communicate by phone with co-workers, colleagues, and parents. Many calls I attempted to make were to people unfamiliar with the use of the relay. I often experienced hang-ups and was mistaken for making prank calls. People avoided my calls simply because they were ignorant of my system. I grew frustrated and avoided the use of the phone. Recently, I was granted the pleasure of the trial use of the CapTel. This unique system granted me more control over my phone calls. Not only did I grow comfortable using the CapTel for pleasure, but also developed confident in the ability to make contacts with people who are totally unfamiliar with the system. I found the CapTel much more consumer friendly specifically for me than the general Relay System. You would not believe how easy it has become for me to just pick up the phone and place a call without hesitating. I trust people with oral communication skills like myself are finding the same pleasure. I pray this service continues throughout life.

Sincerely,

Karen L. Smith